

Ways God May Reveal His Will, Part 1 - Acts 21:1-4 – June 21st, 2009

- I know I say this at the start of every series however, this is one of the most interesting, informative and applicable chapters in this book.
- Please hear me out on this one. We are about to embark on a study, in great detail, of how it is that God reveals what His will is for us.
- I know of few other topics in the Bible that are of as great of an importance, as this one; "how do I know what God's will is for my life?"
- It is for this reason that, for this series, I've carefully and prayerfully selected the title; "Ways God May Reveal His Will." This is part one.
- The Apostle Paul will rise from the pages of scripture, and show us how it is, and the way it is, that God may show us what His will is.

1. Through difficulty and hardship (Verses 1-3)

1 After **we had torn ourselves away from them**, we put out to sea and sailed straight to Cos. The next day we went to Rhodes and from there to Patara. 2 We found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, went on board and set sail. 3 After sighting Cyprus and passing to the south of it, we sailed on to Syria. We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo.

v1 Seems to indicate that this was a most difficult departure because they had to tear themselves away from the Ephesian elders.

v2-3 Luke gives us their detailed travel route, which by any stretch of the imagination is riddled with hardship and even uncertainty.

- It's almost like Luke is recording out of his diary as he tells us of all the stops along the way. Notable amongst them was Rhodes.
- One has to wonder why they didn't visit the Colossus while in Rhodes. After all, it was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient World.
- It's also interesting to note in verse 3 that when they landed at Tyre, they get off the ship for one week while its cargo was unloaded.
- Why does Luke need to record this? Perhaps the Holy Spirit wants us to know that they traveled on a cargo ship not a cruise ship.
- They were not there for sightseeing on a cruise ship they were there for soul winning and disciple making, and they took a cargo ship.
- I think, we think God's will is always revealed and packaged together neatly and nicely with all its ease and comfort. That's God's will!
- The reason I believe this is true is because when we go through difficulty and hardship, we are prone to think we're out of God's will.
- We do err when we interpret our hardships as meaning we're not in the will of God. I think of when Paul was stoned to death in Lystra.

Acts 14:21-22 21 They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, 22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. NIV

Isaiah 48:10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. KJV

Ecclesiastes 7:14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, But in the day of adversity consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, So that man can find out nothing that will come after him. NKJV

2. Through the Spirit's urging (Verse 4)

4 Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days. **Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.**

v4 Tells us that while staying with the disciples there for seven days, they, "through the Spirit ...urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.

- Notice that it is in and through the Holy Spirit that they are urging Paul not to go to Jerusalem. What will Paul do? He'll go to Jerusalem.
- This particular verse has been hotly debated among Bible commentators. One even said that they wished Luke never recorded it.

- The question that's creating all the fuss is; "was the Holy Spirit forbidding Paul from going to Jerusalem because it was not God's will?"
- In an attempt to answer this, some Bible commentators suggest it wasn't God's will Paul go because he ends up in prison for two years.
- However, on the opposite side of that table, there are other commentators who argue that it was indeed God's will he go to Jerusalem.

"The Spirit foretold Paul's persecution, but does not appear to have forbidden the journey."

Adam Clarke

"It was their mistake, for his trial would be for the furtherance of the Gospel, and Paul knew it."

Matthew Henry

"The Holy Spirit revealed to them that bonds and affliction awaited St. Paul at Jerusalem. The inference that Paul should not go up to Jerusalem was their own."

The Pulpit Commentary

"Now the Spirit could never instruct men to give advice to one, which, if followed, would be an attempt to escape the very pathway of suffering that the Spirit indicated was lying ahead of him. I believe that at this point, Paul was true to the deepest facts, and that he was right."

G Campbell Morgan

- So, the question remains; "was it or was it not God's will for Paul to go to Jerusalem, which is it?" The answer is; "yes." Let me explain!
- If it wasn't God's will he go, God was still able to mightily use the beloved Apostle Paul, even though he was out of the will of God.
- If it was God's will he go, God was still able to mightily use the beloved Apostle Paul, even though he was in prison for those two years.

- It's like when Joshua asks Who's standing over him with His sword drawn; "whose side are you on?" and the Lord answers; "neither."

- In other words, whether on the side of those who believe it wasn't God's will, or those who believe it was, this can give us great hope!

- I don't imagine God in heaven playing a chess game with me related to knowing His will. He's not going to keep me from knowing it.

"I work from the assumption that the Lord wants me in the middle of His will more than I want to be there. I keep the weight on Him to make it real clear to me."

Damian Kyle, Senior Pastor – Calvary Chapel Modesto California

- It's been said that; "when you don't know, fall back on what you do know." I do know that God is always only good, and His will is best.

- I am really looking forward, with great anticipation, to what God is going to do in and through this series on His will, in Acts chapter 21.